WITH THE AID OF THE WIDOW.

BY PETER M'ARTHUR.

In affairs of the heart a man, especially a young man, needs a disinterested woman to guide, to encourage or to check him, as the case may require. Now, Harry Watson was so fortunate as to have a charming widow as his confidant and friend. She was several years his senior, and he was once very much in love with her—or thought he was. She had poohpoohed his proposal and told him that, although she thought him a fine, clever young fellow, she had no desire to take a boy to raise and that he mustn't talk nonsense. Of course he was very tragic and visited the west to hunt grizzlies, hoping to be mastic[illegible] by one, but he presently came to his senses and returned to New

"HOW DO YOU KNOW I AM IN LOVE?"

York. He was naturally rather shamefaced when he met the widow, but she was so jolly that he soon forgot his previous absurdity, and they became fast friends.

But about the middle of the season a change came over him. The widow wondered a little at first and then smiled. He was absentminded, had no confidences to impart and could no longer be relied on for an escort.

"Well, Harry," she finally inquired when her patience was exhausted, "with whom are you in love now?"

"How do you know I am in love?"

"Oh, I am familiar with the symptoms, and besides I have seen you in love before!"

"No, no!" he exclaimed ruefully. "I never knew until now what love means!"

The widow thought of some wild protestations she had once heard and smiled, but her smile was good natured and forgiving.

"Really," she said, "this looks serious, and perhaps I was wrong in not interfering sooner! But come, tell me who she is?"

"Miss Townsend."

"Esther?"

He nodded.

The widow blushed slightly and murmured something altogether irrelevant about taking a boy to raise, after all. Then she exclaimed:

"That is the first sensible thing I have ever known you to do! Have you proposed to her yet?"

"No, indeed! She knows nothing of how I feel toward her!"

"Perhaps not," said the widow. "Some girls are queer."

"And besides she seems altogether unapproachable. Something seems to make it almost a sin to think of loving her."

The widow understood this at once. Esther's mother had died some years ago, and, being the only daughter, Esther had become the housekeeper for her father and brothers, and in consequence she naturally assumed a matronly attitude toward young men.

"You poor boy!" said the widow in humorous sympathy. "What would become of you if it were not for me? But if you obey my orders I will guarantee that you will win her."

"What must I do?" asked Harry, brightening.

"You must go and propose to Esther tonight."

"I haven't the courage."

"You don't need courage. A proper amount of fear and trembling helps a man wonderfully when he is proposing."

Harry argued for awhile, but the upshot of the matter was that he obeyed the widow and sought Esther with a carefully prepared proposal on the tip of his tongue. Being so occupied with this it was only natural that his conversational efforts were of the blundering kind that would be cruel to repeat. And after the first few minutes Esther was no more at ease than he was, for embarrassment is very contagious among lovers, whether they realize that they are in love or not. Finally, after much disjointed chat, Harry made the plunge, like a man closing his eyes and leaping over a precipice.

"Miss Townsend, I know that I am pre—that I—er—er—I love you."

Her reply was an inarticulate murmur of surprise.

"I cannot dare to think that you will consent to be my wife just now, but perhaps some day—will you not let me hope? I will do anything to win your love."

"Please don't, don't, Mr. Watson! It is impossible."

He sank back into his chair with a groan and covered his face with his hands.

"I am so sorry this has happened," she said with forced calmness. "I like you very much, and I thought we were always to be friends, but you can see that it is impossible for me to marry. It is my duty to take care of papa and my brothers and try to take the place of my poor mother."

"I felt from the first," said Harry sorrowfully, "that it was hopeless to think of you. You are too good for me."

"Don't say that, please, for I like you very much more than any one I know. If I ever did lo—marry it would be just such a man as you—good, clever and generous. But you see that it is impossible, don't you?"

He looked into her appealing eyes, but could not answer. Nothing is so sublimely tragic as a beautiful girl sacrificing herself to a mistaken sense of duty, and she appeared so sublime to him that he couldn't help thinking her in the right.

"Please leave me now, Mr. Watson. I am so sorry this has happened. You must forget me—no, not that—for I shall always like to think of you as a friend, and when you have forgotten this—this—please go. I must be true to my duty."

When Harry had reached the street, the weight of his disappointment pressed down on him in the darkness and maddened him. He loved her more than ever and was utterly without hope. When he had walked about until his sorrow had somewhat exhausted itself, he began to crave sympathy and naturally sought the widow. It was a delicate matter to handle, but she questioned him tactfully and soon learned all that she wished to know, and that was that his love was undoubtedly returned.

After talking the whole matter over Harry felt comforted, and he felt sure that the clever widow was going to do all in her power to help him. But he did not imagine that while they were discussing the subject the peerless, self sacrificing Esther was weeping bitterly and almost rebelling against her fate. It was only by magnifying her duty to an appalling grimness that she finally recovered her composure and soothed the pain at her heart to an aching numbness.

As soon as the widow felt that Harry had recovered from the first bitterness of his disappointment she ordered him to go and call on Esther. He obeyed, and a few such calls restored to some extent their old relationship, and they could talk more like brother and sister. And one evening she talked to him in most sisterly fashion, warning him wistfully to beware of the wiles of the widow.

"You know I look on you as a brother, and I should not like to see one of my brothers as much in her company as you are. Of course she is very nice, but people say she is so designing."

"The little minx," said the widow when she heard of it. "I know I am designing, but she will find that it is for her happiness I am doing it now—and incidentally for my own—or just the reverse."

She of course diagnosed the case as one of jealousy and was pleased. Harry didn't understand the last part of her remark, but he did not question.

"Are you going to the Madison musicale?" the widow asked.

"Yes. Esther and her father will be there," Harry replied.

"Well, I shall be there, too, and I may want you to do me a favor. Will you do it?"

"Certainly."

On the night of the musicale the widow was triumphantly beautiful. There was the light of battle in her eyes, and that with good reason, for she had

"YOU ARE TOO GOOD FOR ME."

brought her own affairs and those of several other people to a crisis. But no one could look at her perfect figure and animated face without feeling that she could conquer the most obdurate by her charms and have her will. Harry had never seen her looking so bewitching, for he had never seen her so thoroughly alert and aroused. Had Esther not been present to allure and yet repel him with her lilylike sweetness and nobility of soul it is possible that old thoughts might have been aroused. But his eyes were dwelling constantly on her pure, calm face, and she seemed to him more than ever unattainable. When the evening was well advanced, the widow tapped him on the shoulder with her fan.

"I have come to ask you for that favor," she said.

"I am willing to do your bidding."

"Take Esther into the conservatory and propose to her."

"I can't."

"You must. If you do, I think I can promise you that you will win her—if not tonight, very soon afterward. But you must propose tonight."

Hope made him courageous, and he did as he was directed.

When he had found a sufficiently retired alcove in the conservatory, he renewed his proposal and pleaded with the stately beauty. But it was in vain.

"It cannot be," she answered. "My duty is quite clear to me, and I must sacrifice my own feelings to it. I feel that to take care of my father in his declining years is a trust imposed on me by my dead mother."

"Then you are not indifferent to me?"

She was too honest to deny her love. She bowed her head in assent, and the tears welled to her eyes.

"You do love me, Esther?"

"Yes."

"And yet you will sacrifice both our hearts?"

"It may seem cruel, but I know that I am doing what is right."

"Good heavens! What can I do?"

"You must go away somewhere. I did wrong to ask that our friendship continue. It increases the pain for both of us."

He groaned in misery.

"I am very, very sorry," she said.

They looked at each other silently for awhile. At last a slight sob shook her, and she murmured:

"I must get papa to take me home."

She turned and walked away from him quickly. Before she had gone a dozen paces she stopped as if transfixed and looked with dilated eyes into an alcove she was passing.

Then she ran back to Harry and, almost fainting, caught his arm.

"Take me home! Take me away from here!"

He hastened to call a carriage. When they had entered it, Esther began to

"TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE!"

cry, and he tried to console her. Instinctively he put his arm about her, and she did not resist. A moment after—it was the natural thing to do—he kissed her, and, leaning her head on his shoulder, she wept until her sorrow had abated. He could not imagine what was the matter, but when they arrived at her home she enlightened him. As she was leaving him in the conservatory she had seen her father kneeling before the widow proposing to her and had seen her grant him a kiss of acceptance. All her illusions about duty vanished in an instant. Her father was getting another to take care of him, and her occupation was gone.

"I shall leave home!" she cried angrily. "If he marries her, I must leave home!"

"I have a home to offer you," said Harry.

But it is not necessary to follow them through this last scene, which could have but one result—happiness for both.

It never occurred to Harry that the widow had ordered him to propose to Esther so that she could bring her father, as if by accident, to see the little scene. She had watched his movements, and, judging the correct moment to a nicety, had brought Mr. Townsend to that part of the conservatory. He liked Harry too much to interrupt, which the widow had taken care to learn before she took the step, but he was naturally surprised. Of course she promptly sympathized with him on losing his housekeeper and so wrested from him the proposal which she had long ago planned. She had not counted on Esther overlooking her part of the drama, but that only hastened the action of her plot, and she was not sorry when she heard of it.

Harry was naturally profuse in his thanks, for his happiness so blinded him to everything else in the world that he thought it was for his sake it had all been done. When this dawned upon the widow, she laughed loud and long.

"Oh, go away," she laughed, "to your billing and cooing with Esther! You are such a pair of fools you should be happy together." And she added somewhat mischievously:

"You see, I am in a sense taking a boy to raise, after all. But you will find me a very indulgent mother-in-law."

An Antifat Failure.

A New York restaurant recently undertook to cater exclusively for obese people. Nothing of a fattening character was served. The establishment was hailed with delight by a large crowd of banters. Its history was about as follows: The first day 100 ate there, the second 90, the third 80, and so on down until the proprietor found himself without a single patron until the sheriff came and took everything in sight.

WHAT TROUBLED HIM.

The Bridegroom Was Indignant and Thought He Had Good Cause.

The editor of the Bloomville Eagle picked up his shears and called:

"Come in!"

"Are you Colonel Rocksley?" asked the tall, robust looking young man who had accepted the invitation.

"I am," the editor replied. "What can I do for you?"

"I have come here to demand satisfaction," said the caller, producing a crumpled copy of the Bloomville Eagle and pointing at an article on the first page. "My name is Sowders—Ed Sowders. I was married last night to the daughter of Major Poindexter."

"Yes," said the editor; "I believe we printed something about the wedding."

"You did," Mr. Sowders assented. "That's why I am here now. Just read that paragraph, please, and read it out loud."

Colonel Rocksley took the paper, looked at the paragraph to which his attention had been called and read:

"The wedding took place at the home of the bride, where the happy couple will reside until the groom can find a job."

"Well," the editor explained, "I'm sorry that got into the paper. Of course I wouldn't have permitted it to go if I had seen it, but unfortunately I haven't time to redd everything we print before it is put in type. I can appreciate your feelings, Mr. Sowders, and I assure you that it will give us pleasure to correct the matter. I will publish an item saying that you are not going to live with the bride's parents. Will that be satisfactory?"

"No, sir; it won't," the bridegroom declared with considerable emphasis. "You evidently don't understand the situation. It ain't what you say about our living at the home of the bride's parents that makes me mad. It's the insinuation that I want to find a job that I object to."

The matter was compromised by the publication of the subjoined verses in the next number of The Eagle:

THE JOY THAT WE CANNOT RECALL.

There are wrongs that can never be righted;
There are wounds that e'en time cannot heal.
We speak, and some fair hope is blighted;
Words oft are more deadly than steel!

There are bruises that linger forever;
We say but a word, and, alack!
Though we long to recall it, we never
Can give the old happiness back!

—Chicago Times-Herald.

Lost Privilege.

Mean Man—I'll never lend him money again.

Other Man—Why not? Hasn't he paid you?

Mean Man—Paid me! Why, he paid me two days after he borrowed the money; didn't even give me a chance to say to my friends that I'd be lucky if I ever got it back.—Syracuse Herald.

How He Should Look at It.

"Well," said the English yachtsman, "you have beaten us."

"You shouldn't put it in that way," was the reply. "We did no more than the instincts of self preservation demanded. We were obliged to come in first in order to prevent you from beating us."—Washington Star.

High Rollers.

Mrs. Stubb—John, here is an account of some writer going out too far in the surf. For an incredible length of time he battled with the wild breakers.

Mr. Stubb—H'm! I guess he must have been one of those struggling authors we hear so much about.—Chicago News.

Following Directions.

"Mrs. Stuffem was told by that eminent actress who reduced her weight 25 pounds by dieting to strictly avoid all starchy preparations."

"Yes."

"So now she has her linen done up limp."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Matter of Necessity.

Chicago Man—What's the fare to St. Louis?

Ticket Broker—Do you want to go there today?

Chicago Man—No, of course I don't want to, but I am compelled to.—Chicago News.

A Side Light on History.

Teacher—For what else was Julius Caesar noted?

Tommy Tucker (who had studied the lesson somewhat hastily)—His great strength, ma'am. He threw a bridge across the Rhine.—Chicago Tribune.

What Profits It?

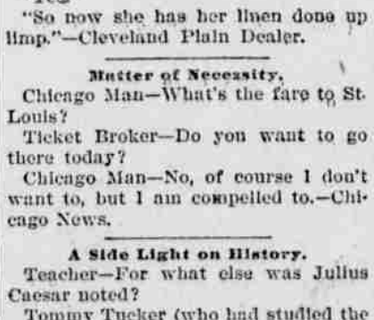
"Don't was'e yoh time talkin 'bout yoh neighbors," said Uncle Eben. "Yoh neighbors is probably talkin 'bout yoh, an yoh kin look aroun foh yohse'f an see how much good it's doin 'em."—Washington Star.

What Spoiled It.

"What a doleful expression your photograph has on!"

"Yes; I was feeling all right until the photographer told me to look pleasant."—Detroit Free Press.

The Persimmonville Yacht Race.



The Captain of the Possum—Gemmen, I reckon we might jes' as well gib up de race. All in favor ob quittin say "aye."

First Mate—Hurry up dat vote, cap'n, or you won't be able to git a quorum.—New York World.

OBEYED ORDERS.

Indeed He Followed His Instructions Too Well.

"A man needs a good ablebodied imagination in the theatrical business," said an old time manager. "His trade is to appeal to the public fancy, and naturally his statements become more or less flowery and figurative, but after you once get them gauged you're all right. I remember recently talking to the proprietor of a house up in Ohio who said that he always liked to do business with Mr. —— because he could depend implicitly on anything he said. I was surprised.

"'Why, my dear man,' I exclaimed, 'don't you know —— has the reputation of being the biggest liar in the profession?'

"'Oh, yes,' he replied, 'but I always divide anything he says by 4 and then take the cube root.'

"That was a good scheme and reminds me, by the way, that it is very difficult for any manager to tell the exact bald truth about the receipts of an engagement. He feels it his duty to put on a few embellishments, as they do when they send in reports of Filipino mortality on the firing line.

"A friend of mine who has a theater in Minnesota and who is a very truthful man in private life was in New York lately and before leaving home told a new treasurer he had just employed to wire him a daily report of business and be sure to raise the receipts $300 each time, so he could show the messages to his friends.

"The day of his arrival he dropped into Klaw & Erlanger's office to have a chat.

"'Well, Billy,' said Mr. Erlanger, 'what kind of business are you doing out at your place?'

"Just then the telegraph boy came in with a message for the visitor, and he saw a chance to make a hit.

"'This must be my report,' said he, handing over the envelope. 'Open it and see for yourself.'

"Erlanger tore it open and read this:

"William Smith, New York:

"Receipts last night, $401. Raised it $300 as per your request. PETER JONES, Treasurer."

—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Alpine Climbing In the Pantry.

—New York Journal.

Density Unexampled.

"You can't very well take a fall out of the automobile," observed the lay figure, meaning to comment upon the safety of the new contrivance.

The unconscious imbecile sprang at once to his feet, crying: "Oh, yes, you can! You can call it mobile, instead of autumn-mobile!"

But, although he drew many diagrams, it was still easy for the others to affect not to understand.—Detroit Journal.

Merited Reproof.

Clarence—I am afraid, Maude, you do not care for me as much as I wish you did.

Maude—What in the world makes you think such a thing as that?

Clarence—I suppose I have told a dozen different girls that they were the first woman I ever loved, and you were the first one ever to question my veracity.—Boston Transcript.

His Experience.

"Woman's work is never done," quoted the sympathetic citizen.

"That's right," answered Mr. Meekton earnestly. "I have observed it in Henrietta's case. Woman's work is never done. There is always enough of it left over to keep her husband busy from the time he gets through dinner till he's so tired he has to go to bed."—Washington Star.

A Dangerous Associate.

"Sir, the men on the firing line refuse to go out again if Private Pineknot goes with 'em."

"What's the matter with the private?"

"He used to hunt deer up in Maine, sir, and the other men are afraid for their lives."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

What They Were.

"What have you in all those large bundles stacked up in the hall?" asked the young woman who was having her first view of the newspaper plant.

"Those," said the editor, "are some of the poems on Indian summer that I shall not be able to use."—Chicago Times-Herald.

His Opportunity.

"I can't find words sufficient to express my gratitude for the honor thus conveyed," began the politician.

"Now is the time to subscribe for one of my Universal Dictionaries," shouted a book agent in the crowd.—Philadelphia North American.

He Hadn't Tried One.

"Why don't you think the automobile will supplant the bicycle?"

"Because you can't go out with an automobile when you ought to be at work and square it with your conscience by calling it exercise."—Chicago Post.

Still Too Long.

Footlight—What do you think of my new piece?

Sue Brette—It's too long.

"There is only one act."

"Yes; I know it."—Yonkers Statesman.